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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"
Rob Mahlert -- Web site
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With Contributions by:

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~ Microsoft Bows To EU! ~ People Are Talking!   ~ A Thief's Blunder!
~ Microsoft Appeals End! ~ Senate Passes Tax Ban! ~ Leopard Out Loose!
~ Storm Worm Now Squall! ~ USPS Forwards, E-Mail ~ Tramiel To Be At CHM!

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                   -* USPS Forwards, Email Be Next? *-
                 -* Parents More Ambivalent About Net!  *-
                -* OLPC Production Delays Will Mean Shortages *-




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->From the Editor's Keyboard              "Saying it like it is!"
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I guess that I must have blinked - it's almost Halloween time already!
Time flies by much too quickly; and I realize that I've probably said
that in this editorial many times over the years! It must be true! I
can't believe, that's all. This summer just seemed to fly by, but I do
realize that the weather is changing - trying working at a golf course,
starting at sun-up, and see just how cold it can be at this time of year!

So, it being October, that means World Series time! I'm not usually a
big fan of the World Series any more unless a team I like is playing.
Since my Cubs are out of it and my Tigers crapped out late in the season,
I had to look at other options for support. Yes, I live in Red Sox
nation, so they were a logical choice. And the Tribe knocked off those
despicable Yankees ("The Evil Empire"), much to my glee!

Okay, so it's not necessarily the Red Sox and the Colorado Rockies being
in the Series that I'm interested in for this week's editorial. You just
know that I have to find something "newsworthy" to tie it all in! Y'see,
Rudy Giuliani, the former mayor of New York City and now Republican
candidate for president (well, maybe some of you haven't opened up a
newspaper in months!), was in Boston the other day doing some campaign
appearances. Someone in the press corps asked him a question about the
Yankees not being in the Series, or something along that line. His
response was that he was rooting for the Red Sox; and that he wasn't just
saying that because he was in Massachusetts. His rationale was that he
was supporting the American League team.

Now we all know that Giuliani is an avid New Yorker. And as such, I have
to say that Rudy is full of it. No, this has nothing to do with his
politics or his candidacy. But please, don't go there Rudy! You're from
New York. The Yankees are in your veins. Yankees fans do not support the
Red Sox, and vice versa. It's just not done - it's heresy (of sorts)!
Boston fans don't buy it, and certainly New York fans don't believe it
(how many "Traitor" headlines made New York papers?!?!

I mean, that's like Jack Tramiel (remember him??) stating for the record,
that since Atari was gone, he supported Commodore rather than opting for
the Mac or PC! It just ain't gonna happen! So Rudy, just forget about
trying to play politician and supporting the Sox while politicking in
Red Sox nation! Show no fear, and say you want to see the Rockies beat
the Sox (it ain't gonna happen, but you can say it!) because your beloved
Yankees are out playing golf somewhere warm! Go Sox!

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone, and I'm
wondering about what topic I should talk about this week.

There are so many things going on in the world at large going on today,
and so few things going on in the Atari world. Okay, how about 'Human
Nature'?

Have you ever noticed that, no matter what subject you pick, be it
sports or politics or what car to buy, there are always at least two
distinct groups?

I mean, in politics there are always at least 2 'camps'. Both are sure
that they're right. Both are sure that the other side is dead wrong.
And yet we find a way to make it work. Sure, there are always those who
see the impending doom of civilization because someone else's
philosophies are getting an airing, but by and large, things go on.

If you've been watching the World Series... or more accurately watching
the people watching the Series... you'll see what I mean too. There are
Sox fans, and there are Rockies fans. Although in this part of the
country, there are far fewer Rockies fans. Then there are those who
just want to watch a good baseball game. Usually this is the smallest
group.

This past week it became evident that my wife was going to need a new
car quickly. Her old car... and I DO mean old (a 1992 Ford Escort)...
was on it's last legs... wheels, actually, since everything to do with
the steering and suspension systems needed replacing.

So, as word slowly circulated through both her family and mine that we
were car shopping, we started getting calls. "Make sure you get an
American car", "Be smart and get a Japanese car", "Take a look at the
new Scion", "My cousin loves his Subaru", "Get an SUV this time", "What
about a hybrid?", "Have you looked at the new 'crossovers'?".

Oy. It's enough to make you crazy. Now, I'm not what you'd consider a
'car guy'. To me, a vehicle is something to get you from point A to
point B. Period. I've never seen cars as a status symbol or a sign of
virility (but I'm not into my mid-life crisis yet), so most of what I
see advertised is fluff... eye candy.

I DID mention to my wife that she might want to look at some of the new,
smaller SUVs. Neither of us like SUVs, and we really don't need one,
but the added height would enable her to see around the inconsiderate
morons who feel that they do need one while at a stop light or trying
to pull out of a parking space. If you've ever tried to back out of a
parking space with an SUV on either side of you, you know what I'm
talking about. And why do these SUV drivers feel the need to creep out

into the intersection while waiting for the light to change? I've seen
several that have crept out far enough that they couldn't see the light
when it did change. And their damned cell phones! PUT THE DAMNED THINGS
DOWN WHEN YOU'RE DRIVING, WILL YA?

Oops. Was that out loud? Sorry. [grin]

Anyway, I mentioned it to my wife, and she dismissed the idea out of
hand. Why? I don't know. She didn't like the idea of an SUV, and she's
the one who's going to be driving it. Even though I took the dismissal
of my suggestion in stride, most of the people who've checked back to
see what she ended up buying think she made the wrong choice.

For the record, she just bought a 2007 Ford Focus liftback. She's happy,
so I'm happy. But everyone else seems to feel that they know better and
keep arguing for the hybrid or the SUV or whatever. Well, I hope they
let me know when THEY are about to go car shopping. [grin]

It kind of reminds me of the old days when, if you wanted an affordable
home computer that could do graphics, there was the Atari ST and the
Amiga. The Mac doesn't count... remember that I said "affordable"?

Of course, I chose the Atari. The Amiga was more expensive, and while it
did have better graphics capabilities, it wasn't something that
bothered me... who could possibly need more than 256 colors in 300X200
resolution?? AND the Amiga's OS was loaded from disk. Obviously an
inferior option when compared to an OS that was simply 'there' when you
turned on the machine.

Then there were 'the others'. Those who chose the Amiga. They had their
reasons too. Better resolution, more colors, expandability, etc.

So, everyone was happy, right? Well, not so much. I can clearly remember
walking into my local Post Office one day wearing an ICD tee-shirt.

"Oh," said a young guy standing next to me, "You must have an Amiga".

"No," I replied.

"So... you gonna get one?" He asked.

"No thanks," I replied, "I've already got a doorstop."

I saw nothing wrong with this at the time. I'd chosen the computer that
gave me the most bang for the buck, sure that it'd hold me in good
stead for years without having to worry about upgrades to the OS and
hardware. Upgrading would only result in incompatibilities with things
that I was already using and really liked. Plus, I knew I wasn't going
to have buckets full of money to put into upgrades for a while.

Well, the Amiga went on to become the basis of the Video Toaster and
other cool things, and I started to think that maybe these poor,
misguided Amiga users might have a point or two. Of course, then the
MegaSTE, TT and Falcon030 came out and I was happy again. Even though I
didn't intend to purchase any of them, I was warmed by the idea that
'my side' was making strides.

Today I'm content using what I want to use, and helping those who are
misguided and using what they want to use. Oops. Okay, so I'm not as

evolved as I'd thought.

I want to take a minute and mention those horrible, horrible wildfires out in California. The devastation and heartbreak are unimaginable to me. I try not to interject my religious beliefs here in this column, but if you're a mind to, say a prayer for those out there dealing with this. Not only those who are finding themselves back at square one and having to rebuild their homes and their lives, but those firefighters doing battle with one of the true primeval forces of nature. Whether the fires were set or whether they were due to the dry, hot conditions and overgrown vegetation, the loss is going to be enormous on many levels.

Okay, on with the reason for this column; the news, hints, tips and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Paul Matthews asks about where to find Atari apps:

"I am looking for full copies of the following Atari applications in English please with manuals etc.

Kobold 3.5
NVDI 5 (Upgrade is fine as I already have version 4)
Jinee 2.5 or Ease 5
MagiC 6.2
ImageCopy 4CD
Positive Image 2
View II
Thats Write 3
Protext 6 "

Greg Goodwin tells Paul:

"You can have my copy of Positive Image 2 for the cost of the shipping box and postage. I fear that I had much instability with that program on my Falcon. Your experience may differ. Email me your worldly location with Atari somewhere in the heading, and I'll reply."

Dave Wade jumps in and puts in his wish-list:

"I'd also like to upgrade my NVDI to V5. Any idea where I can do that any one?"

Fidel-Sebastian Hunrichse-Lara tells Dave:

"Try this: <http://www.application-systems.de/> "

Robert Bernardo posts this amazing tidbit:

"Gigantic surprise! Former CEO of Commodore Business

Machines and of Atari Corp., Jack Tramiel, will be making a
rare public appearance! Yesterday I received a message on
the answering machine from Karen Tucker, CMO/VP of Public
Programs for the Computer History Museum in Mountain
View (San Jose area), California. Here is part of what she
said:

... I thought you might be happy to know that the museum is
going to have a celebration of the impact of the Commodore 64
on December 10. It's kind of a 25th anniversary celebration,
and Jack Tramiel will speak as well as Steve Wozniak and
William C. Lowe, the father of the IBM PC, and Adam Chulaniak
(sp?) who was the Amiga guy at Commodore, and we're still
settling on the moderator. But I thought that if you are still
part of the Fresno Commodore User Group... that you guys
might want to make the trip down to Mountain View for this
event on December 10.

All day today I've been playing phone tag with Karen in
order to get more details and received another message
saying that the exact title of that night's program is "The
Impact of the Commodore 64: A 25-Year Celebration". More
details to come when I find out more.

The Computer History Museum is located at 1401 N. Shoreline Blvd.,
Mountain View, California 94043. The website is
http://www.computerhistory.org

I am so there for this event!"

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time,
same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Neverwinter Nights 2 Adventure Pack!
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   "Mass Effect" Aims To Evoke Emotion!
                                   Wii Sports Sweeps Board!
                                   And more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Atari Announces Neverwinter Nights 2 Adventure Pack

Atari, Inc. announced the development of the first Neverwinter Nights2
Adventure Pack to be available exclusively by digital download. Created
by Atari and some of the most prominent members of the Neverwinter
Nights 2 communities, Neverwinter Nights 2: Mysteries of Westgate
provides hours of additional entertainment with all new engrossing
storylines, professional voice acting, enchanting musical scores, new
in-game content, and much more. Neverwinter Nights 2 is set in the
Dungeons & Dragons Forgotten Realms universe created by Wizards of the
Coast, a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. Dungeons & Dragons is under license
from HPG, the licensing division of Hasbro.

Developed by Ossian Studios, Neverwinter Nights 2: Mysteries of Westgate
is the first full featured Adventure Pack available from Atari. Set in
the infamous Forgotten Realms city of Westgate, players find themselves
in possession of a powerful but cursed treasure that threatens to destroy
them. Linked to the underworld organization known as the Night Masks, the
treasure will draw players into a city-spanning clash between warring
factions. Players must choose their allegiance in order to break the
curse and ultimately uncover a plot that threatens Westgate itself.

"Our premium module program for the original Neverwinter Nights was an
enormous success due to the sheer amount of new, high-quality content we
provided in each adventure," said Hudson Piehl, Vice President of Product
Development, Atari, Inc. "With our new Adventure Packs, such as the
upcoming Neverwinter Nights 2: Mysteries of Westgate, we are evolving the
premium module: fans can expect higher production values, deep
storylines, and lengthy new campaigns they've come to associate with
Neverwinter Nights."

From the creators of the critically-acclaimed Neverwinter Nights module,
Darkness over Daggerford, Neverwinter Nights 2: Mysteries of Westgate
will feature a non-linear, open-ended single-player campaign with
numerous side quests covering more than 15 hours of game play. Atari's
new Adventure Pack will also feature 3 new companions; an entirely new
underground sewers tile set themed after the seedy underbelly of
Westgate; a host of new monsters to do battle with, including some truly
epic foes; an exciting new and original musical score; as well as
thousands of new lines of professionally recorded dialogue.

The Neverwinter Nights franchise has sold more than three million copies
worldwide, is translated into 10 languages, sold in more than 40 countries
and features one of the largest and most active fan communities in all of
gaming. To date, fans of the franchise, which includes Neverwinter Nights,
Neverwinter Nights: Shadows of Undrentide, Neverwinter Nights: Hordes of
the Underdark and Neverwinter Nights 2, have created more than 5,000
modifications to the original game using the award-winning toolset
included with the full game that allows players to create their own
universes, quests and storylines.

Neverwinter Nights 2: Mysteries of Westgate is scheduled for release in
fall 2007. The new Mysteries of Westgate, as well as future adventure
packs, require the original game and will be made available for purchase
and download directly from Atari. More information about Neverwinter
Nights 2 can be found at www.nwn2.com <http://www.nwn2.com>, which
includes user forums, project news, development updates and more.

"Mass Effect" Space Epic Aims To Evoke Emotion

Saving the galaxy from annihilation has to be emotional, according to a Canadian video game developer who wants players of action role playing title "Mass Effect" to weigh their choices carefully as they fight for the future.

BioWare Corp, the Canadian game house being bought by Electronic Arts Inc, is giving players a big swath of outer space to explore and defend with its upcoming Xbox 360 title "Mass Effect."

But with some of the most realistic and best looking digital actors available in any video game to date, BioWare is also out to prove it can make players feel passionately about the characters in the story.

"These characters are living people, I mean they have personalities and you literally interact with them in the way that you'd have real-life conversations," Casey Hudson, the Mass Effect project director at BioWare, said in an interview.

"You get to know them, you start to care about them."

Players are cast as Commander Shepard, an elite agent of the human military, and tasked with saving the galaxy from an ancient race of machines which wipe out all advanced organic life every 50,000 years.

To accomplish the mission, players are handed their own spaceship, a map of the galaxy and a mandate to - in BioWare's words - "act without remorse, without hesitation, and outside the limits of the law."

Players also have the say over everything from Shepard's appearance and gender to his or her background story and abilities, as well as which non-player characters emerge.

Voices in the game include actor Seth Green and Marina Sirtis, famous for her role as Deanna Troi on the sci-fi TV show "Star Trek: The Next Generation."

The title's customization options mesh with combat, exploration and dialogue to create what BioWare says will be a trilogy over the lifespan of the Xbox 360.

"The net effect of it is you really feel like it's a seamless, emotionally compelling experience, where you're both the actor on the stage and you're also the director of the entire movie, of this interactive fiction," said BioWare chief executive officer Ray Muzyka.

The game hits shelves next month, but already a review in Game Informer magazine gave it a score of 9.75 out of 10.

"Every demo that we've seen has shown substantial development of what they've promised," said Jennifer Tsao, managing editor, Electronic Gaming Monthly magazine. "There's every reason to expect that it will be an award-winning game."

Muzyka dismissed fan concerns that the Electronic Arts takeover, announced earlier in October, will impact on the quality of BioWare's games.

"We're not going to sacrifice quality because our fans deserve the best and we're going to make sure that we continue to deliver that, each and every game we make," Muzyka said.

EA Delays "Army of Two" To Early 2008

Electronic Arts Inc said on Monday it will delay "Army of Two" to early next year, saying it needed more time to polish the military combat game.

"Army of Two," in which players play as one of a pair of mercenaries carrying out missions, was originally slated to be released on November 13 for Microsoft Corp's Xbox 360 and Sony Corp's PlayStation 3 consoles.

"'Army of Two' has potential to become a lasting EA franchise - so getting the first title right is essential," Frank Gibeau, head of EA Games, said in a statement.

Wedbush Morgan analyst Michael Pachter said he had expected the game to do about $54 million in revenue in EA's fiscal third quarter, which runs through December and was expected to bring the company revenue of $1.6 billion, according to Reuters Estimates.

"It's an important game for them if they hope to establish it as a franchise," Pachter said. "It shouldn't have much of an impact, but the market always seems to assume the worst about the company."

Wii Sports Sweeps Board At Game Awards

A Nintendo computer game that allows players to practice their golf swing or fine-tune their tennis stroke in their living room has won six Bafta awards.

The Japanese company's top-selling title "Wii Sports" swept the board at the British Academy Video Games Awards in central London.

It was named best sports game and picked up five other awards, including best gameplay, innovation and strategy.

Unlike most consoles, Nintendo's Wii uses a wireless, motion-sensitive controller that can be used like a golf club, tennis racket or baseball bat.

Wii Sports lost out in one of the main categories, beaten to the best game prize by "BioShock," an acclaimed "first-person shooter" set in a dystopian underwater city.

Two other games both picked up two prizes: organized crime thriller "Crackdown" (action and adventure; use of audio) and the Greek mythology game "God of War 2" (story and character; technical achievement).

The British Academy of Film and Television Arts is best known for its annual film awards, sometimes referred to as the "British Oscars." It has

awarded prizes to the year's best video games since 1997.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online   -   Online Users Growl & Purr!
  """""""""""""""""""""

                      Jack Tramiel at CHM!!!

Gigantic surprise! Former CEO of Commodore Business Machines and of Atari
Corp., Jack Tramiel, will be making a rare public appearance! Yesterday I
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Public Programs for the Computer History Museum in Mountain View (San Jose
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 http://www.computerhistory.org

I am so there for this event!
Robert Bernardo
Fresno Commodore User Group
http://videocam.net.au/fcug
The Other Group of Amigoids
http://www.calweb.com/~rabel1/

                    Update On Jack Tramiel At CHM

Today I was able to make phone contact with Karen Tucker of the Computer
History Museum and question her on the details for the event, "The Impact
of the Commodore 64: A 25-Year Celebration". Here are the specifics:

Location: Computer History Museum, 1401 N. Shoreline Blvd, (exit from the
101 Freeway) Mountain View, California 94043 Phone: 650 810-1010

Time and format of the event: Monday, Dec. 10

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        6 pm - 7 pm -- Museum member's reception with the guests.
        Beer, wine, and hors' doeuvres served.
        7 pm - 8:30 or 9 pm -- First words/speech by Jack Tramiel,
        panel discussion, question-and-answer session
        Afterwards, informal chit-chat and possible autographs
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Admission -- for the reception, free to museum members ($65 membership)
for the event, free general admission ($10 donation requested)

Seating capacity -- 400

Webpage -- Karen remarks that they are "stupidly slow" at updating the
events' page at http://www.computerhistory.org/events/   but assures that
the event "is really going to happen... definitely".

Guests to speak/appear (updated) -- Jack Tramiel (pronounced /tra mel/,
Karen tells), former CEO of Commodore Business Machines

Steve Wozniak of Apple fame

William C. Lowe, father of the IBM PC

Adam Chowaniec, former vice-president of technology for Amiga at
Commodore Business Machines

John Markoff, moderator of the panel discussion and New York Times
reporter and author of the computer history book, "What the Dormouse"

Leonard Tramiel, former vice-president of software development and v.p.
of advanced technology at Atari Corporation

Jeri Ellsworth, engineer behind the CommodoreOne and the C64 DTV

Media recording - photography (no flash), videography, and audio-taping
permitted. Possible webcast from Liquid Computing of Canada
(Chowaniec's current company), which is sponsoring the event.

Some items are still in flux; when I have further updates, I will post
them.

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        Truly,
        Robert Bernardo
        Fresno Commodore User Group
        http://videocam.net.au/fcug
        The Other Group of Amigoids
        http://www.calweb.com/~rabel1/
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                      A-ONE's Headline News
              The Latest in Computer Technology News
                    Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

                Senate Approves Extension Of Internet Tax Ban

The Senate has approved legislation extending a moratorium on state Internet access taxes for seven years.

With only days left before the Internet tax ban was set to expire, the Senate reached a compromise between lawmakers who proposed a shorter extension and those who insisted it should be made permanent.

"By keeping the Internet tax-free and affordable, Congress can encourage Internet use for distance learning, telemedicine, commerce and other important services," Sen. Ted Stevens, of Alaska, said in a statement on Thursday night.

The vote came about two weeks after the House of Representatives approved a four-year extension of the Internet tax ban.

The two chambers must work out their differences on the bill before a final version can be approved and signed by President George W. Bush.

On Friday, Bush listed the Internet tax ban extension among a list of tasks that Congress had failed to accomplish.

"I urge Congress to keep the Internet tax-free - and to get a bill to my desk that I can sign," Bush said.

The state tax ban has been in place since 1998. It was last renewed by Congress in 2004 for three years. It is scheduled to expire on November 1.

Internet service providers say the price of Internet access could rise by as much as 17 percent if the moratorium on state taxes were allowed to expire.

Some senators, including many Republicans, had argued that a permanent ban on Internet taxes is needed to spur more investment by broadband service providers. They complained that Senate Democratic leaders had blocked a vote on a permanent moratorium.

Apple Sets Leopard Operating Software Loose

Apple's upgraded Leopard operating system goes on sale Friday as trend-setting iPods and iPhones cause the ranks of Macintosh computer lovers to swell.

Eagerly-awaited by Apple's notoriously cultish followers, Leopard's release was delayed so the company's engineers could devote their time to getting iPhones to market in the United States in June.

Leopard features include playful "iChat" video-conferencing and a "Time Machine" that resurrects lost data.

Time Machine was inspired by a survey that indicated only 26 percent of Macintosh users regularly backed up information on their machines to avoid losing it forever in system crashes.

The feature automatically copies music, pictures, applications, files and

"absolutely everything" a person puts on their Macintosh, according to Apple vice president of platform experience Scott Forstall.

The operating system enables people to remotely search for files on all computers connected to their network.

Leopard also has simple tools for people to create "widget" applications that stream feeds such as news or syndicated cartoons from websites onto small windows on computer screens.

It includes improved text-reading, Braille support, and closed-captioning for people with disabilities.

Modifications to iChat allow people linked via web cameras to share slide show presentations, playfully distort their pictures or insert fake backdrops.

Rival Microsoft, whose software powers 90 percent of the world's computers, released its own new operating system, Vista, in January.

Apple has been leveraging the popularity of its market-dominating iPod MP3 players and innovative iPhones to build on its following of Macintosh users, according to industry analysts.

Microsoft Finally Bows To EU Antitrust Measures

Microsoft Corp ended three years of resistance on Monday, finally agreeing to comply with a landmark 2004 antitrust decision by the European Commission.

The defeated software giant announced it would not appeal against a decisive European Union court ruling two months ago that backed the bloc's executive Commission.

"The repercussions of these changes will start now and will continue for years to come," Competition Commissioner Neelie Kroes told a news conference, adding that Microsoft's agreement would have "profound effects" on the software industry.

"It is a victory for the consumer," she said.

Microsoft, which was fined nearly half a billion euros in 2004 and a further 280.5 million euros ($400.6 million) in 2006 for non-compliance, faced the prospect of steep new fines if it did not accommodate the Commission.

"As from today Microsoft has established compliance, no doubt about that," Kroes said. "There is no reason to impose further penalties on Microsoft as of this day."

But Microsoft still faces fines for lack of compliance between 2006 and now, potentially reaching hundreds of millions of euros.

Among other reversals, Microsoft will make available to so-called "open source" software developers information they need to make their programs work smoothly with Microsoft's Windows operating system for personal computers.

Microsoft also slashed high royalties that commercial firms would pay for that interoperability information.

Microsoft suffered a major legal defeat in September when the EU's second-highest court backed the Commission on all major points, ruling the world's largest software maker abused its dominant market position to crush rivals.

Microsoft's Windows runs on 95 percent of the world's personal computers. The Court of First Instance said Microsoft must give rival makers of server software information they need to connect smoothly to Windows desktop software.

Office desktop PCs use work group server software made by Microsoft and others to sign on to, print and access files.

Microsoft drastically altered its royalty program on the interconnection information as part of its agreement.

Open source software developers, such as Samba, will be able to access and use the interoperability information and Microsoft will assert no patent rights against them.

Commercial developers such as IBM or Red Hat must pay a license fee of 0.4 percent of revenues to Microsoft when they redistribute that software, to protect against patent challenges.

That is far less than the 5.95 percent Microsoft had demanded, but it was unclear whether it would meet Samba's General Public License prohibiting any royalties.

"We will have to wait and see what the actual documents are," said Carlo Piana, a lawyer for Samba in Milan.

Those who do not need interconnnect information on which Microsoft claims patents can make a one-off payment of 10,000 euros for a license.

As Microsoft updates its software or adds new software that, too, will be covered by the decision. Disagreements will be settled in London's High Court.

Microsoft said its discussions with the Commission were constructive and it "will continue to work closely with the Commission and the industry to ensure a flourishing and competitive environment for information technology."

The non-profit European Committee of Interoperable Systems expressed satisfaction with the commission's pursuit of Microsoft.

"As always, it is essential that the commission continues vigorously to monitor Microsoft's compliance," the organization said in a statement.

Microsoft's new stance was signaled earlier this month, when the company withdrew from an appeal against a South Korean antitrust ruling. It had appealed to the Seoul High Court.

Kroes personally negotiated with Microsoft Chief Executive Steve Ballmer in conversations and over a meal at a restaurant near her hometown of Rotterdam, in the Netherlands, she said.

"I paid for the dinner," she told the news conference.

Microsoft Formally Withdraws Remaining EU Appeals

Microsoft Corp said on Wednesday it had formally withdrawn two remaining appeals before the European Union's Court of First Instance against European Commission antitrust decisions.

On Monday, the company had dropped appeals against a separate Court of First Instance decision. That decision, announced in December, backed the Commission's 2004 antitrust ruling against the software company.

"Microsoft formally discontinued its appeal" seeking to annul a 280.5 million euro ($399 million) fine imposed by the Commission for non-compliance with a remedy, it said on Wednesday.

That remedy, part of the 2004 decision, had required the company to provide some software information to rivals.

Microsoft also on Wednesday dropped an appeal against a Commission decision that the company said required it to license trade secrets on an open source basis. That, too, grew out of the 2004 ruling.

U.S. Won't Extend Microsoft Antitrust Sanctions

The U.S. Department of Justice said it will not seek to extend the restrictions placed on Microsoft Corp.'s business practices following its antitrust settlement with the U.S. government in 2002.

Many of the restrictions are due to expire Nov. 12, and last week several U.S. states filed motions in favor of extending them for a further five years. Four of those states - New York, Maryland, Louisiana and Florida - had previously said they opposed an extension.

The DOJ had also opposed the extension, and on Friday it made it clear that it would not be making a turnabout like the four U.S. states.

"The United States will not file a motion to extend its Final Judgment as it does not believe that the standard for such an extension has been met," the DOJ said in a court filing with the U.S. District Court, District of Columbia.

The restrictions were part of the 2002 "consent decree" that settled the U.S. government's case against Microsoft. They prohibit Microsoft from retaliating against PC makers that install its competitors' software, or licensing its software to them on unequal terms.

Another requirement - that Microsoft license its APIs (application programming interfaces) to let rival products interoperate with Windows - has already been extended for two years.

The DOJ didn't explain its decision Friday. In August it said it felt the judgment had been successful in preventing Microsoft from continuing its

exclusionary behavior.

The states who favor an extension disagree. They say operating systems haven't evolved as quickly as people thought they would in 2002, and that Microsoft could still use the dominance of Internet Explorer to choke competitors in the emerging Web 2.0 world.

A status hearing that will likely address extending the restrictions is scheduled for Nov. 6 with District Court Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly.

The other states pushing for an extension are California, Connecticut, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Massachusetts and the District of Columbia.

Separately last month the DOJ raised hackles in Europe by criticizing the European Union's decision to reject Microsoft's appeal of its antitrust decision there.

Laptop Foundation Production Delay Means Shortage

A non-profit group developing a low-cost laptop for poor children said that a production delay would cause a shortage of computers available in the United States and Canada as part of a holiday giving program.

The $188 string-pulley-charged XO laptop was scheduled to go into production at a Chinese factory in October, but it is now slated to begin by November 12, said Mary Lou Jepsen, chief technology officer for the One Laptop per Child Foundation.

"We had some last-minute bugs. We've resolved them," she said in a recent interview, adding that the group expected to produce 100,000 laptops this year.

An October launch would have given the group time to produce and ship tens of thousands of laptops to Peru and Uruguay, the first two countries to order the laptops.

It would now be tough to get those laptops to South America by December, in time for kids to use them over their summer vacation, and also meet orders for the foundation's Give 1 Get 1 scheme for people in the United States and Canada, she said.

For $400, Give 1 Get 1 provides buyers with a laptop of their own plus a second machine to a poor child overseas.

The laptop features a string-pulley to charge its battery, a keyboard that switches between languages, a digital video camera, wireless connectivity and Linux open-source operating software tailored for remote regions.

The display switches from color to black-and-white for viewing in direct sunlight - a feature unavailable in laptops at least 10 times more expensive.

It needs just 2 watts of power compared with a typical laptop's 30 to 40 watts, and does away with hard drives, relying instead on flash memory and 4 USB ports to add memory devices. The group is experimenting with a device that uses cows to generate power to charge its battery.

The fourth quarter is the busiest time of the year at computer plants in China, which produce the bulk of PCs from companies such as Hewlett-Packard Co, Dell Inc and Apple Inc.

Jepsen said some laptop customers in the United States and Canada would be able to get their PCs before the holidays, but they would be shipped on a first-come, first-served basis.

"Order early," she said.

The foundation will accept orders on its Web site, http://www.laptopgiving.org/, from November 12.

Storm Worm Now Just a Squall

The Storm Worm's days may be numbered, according to a University of California researcher.

Brandon Enright, a network security analyst at UC San Diego, has been tracking Storm since July and said that, despite the intense publicity that the network of infected computers has received, it's actually been shrinking steadily and is presently a shadow of its former self. On Saturday, he presented his findings at the Toorcon hacker conference in San Diego.

Storm is not really a computer worm. It's a network of computers that have been infected via malicious e-mail messages, and are centrally controlled via the Overnet P-to-P protocol. Enright said he has developed software that crawls through the Storm network and he thinks that he has a pretty accurate estimate of how big Storm really is.

Some estimates have put Storm at 50 million computers, a number that would give its controllers access to more processing power than the world's most powerful supercomputer. But Enright said that the real story is significantly less terrifying. In July, for example, he said that Storm appeared to have infected about 1.5 million PCs, about 200,000 of which were accessible at any given time.

Enright guessed that a total of about 15 million PCs have been infected by Storm in the nine months it has been around, although the vast majority of those have been cleaned up and are no longer part of the Storm network.

Since July, it's been downhill for Storm. That's when antivirus vendors began stepping up their tracking of Storm variants and got a lot better at identifying and cleaning up infected computers, Enright said.

Then on September 11, Microsoftadded Storm detection (Microsoft's name for Storm's components is Win32/Nuwar) into its Malicious Software Removal tool, which ships with every Windows system. Overnight, Storm infections dropped by another 20 percent.

Today, Enright said that Storm is about one-tenth of its former size. His most recent data counts 20,000 infected PCs available at any one time, out of a total network of about 160,000 computers. "The size of the network has been falling pretty rapidly and pretty consistently," he said.

Still, Storm has had a remarkably successful run. It's called Storm because it first popped up in mid-January in spam e-mails that offered late-breaking information on powerful storms that had been battering Europe. Users who clicked on the "Full Story.exe" or "Video.exe" attachments that accompanied the spam were infected by malicious software, making them part of the Storm network.

These machines were then used to send out more spam and launch attacks against other computers. The recent MP3 stock spam that was first spotted earlier this week was sent out by the Storm network, Enright said.

Storm was effective because its creators were really good at creating messages that victims would feel compelled to click, Enright said. In its first few days, it managed to infect more than 300,000 computers, making it the worst malware outbreak since 2005. Its creators have since been masters at creating timely messages for their spam and have also had success getting victims to click on fake e-greeting cards.

The Storm network itself is constantly changing, and has used a variety of technologies that have made it an interesting phenomenon to study. In addition to the peer to peer network, it has used rootkit software to disguise its presence on the PC and a server-switching technique called "fast-flux," which makes the Storm servers harder to find on the network.

It's also developed some interesting ways of keeping researchers like Enright at bay. "If you're a researcher and you hit the pages hosting the malware too much... there is an automated process that automatically launches a denial of service [attack] against you," he said. This attack, which floods the victim's computer with a deluge of Internet traffic, knocked part of the UC San Diego network offline when it first struck.

Lately Storm has been responsible for a large quantity of "pump and dump" spam, which tries to temporarily boost the price of penny stocks. But one area that does not seem to be of interest to Storm's creators is identity theft. "Believe it or not, credit card numbers aren't worth that much money," Enright said. "It's much better to make money... via pump and dump."

Parents More Ambivalent About Net

Parents have become more ambivalent about the Internet, with a new study finding fewer of them considering it good for their children.

The Pew Internet and American Life Project said Wednesday that about 59 percent of Americans with children ages 12-17 consider the Internet a positive influence on their kids. That is based on a 2006 survey, the latest available on the topic, and represents a drop from 67 percent in 2004.

Meanwhile, those who do not believe the Internet has had an effect one way or the other increased to 30 percent, from 25 percent.

"The Internet for a lot of parents is now a mature technology," said Amanda Lenhart, senior research specialist at Pew. "They are not in a honeymoon period with the Internet anymore. They are realizing the Internet is something with good and bad things."

In both years, only a small percentage consider the Internet bad. Although parents are hearing about sexual predators and other dangers online, Lenhart said, they also see the Internet's benefits for homework.

"Parents are seeing both sides of the coin," she said.

The study found parents more concerned about content than time spent online. Sixty-eight percent said they have rules about sites their children can or cannot visit, while only 55 percent control the amount of time they can spend online.

"Time use is seen as problematic for reasons related to obesity, but parents are more concerned about keeping their children sheltered and safe from a lot of the images and things that come through the content on the Internet," Lenhart said.

Parents were more likely than their children to own desktop computers, laptops, cell phones and personal digital assistants, but the kids were more likely to have Apple Inc.'s iPods and other digital music players; 51 percent of children vs. 29 percent of parents.

Children were more likely than parents to consider computers and gadgets helpful to their lives. Among parents, mothers were more likely than fathers to praise technology.

The study of 935 sets of U.S. parents and children was conducted by telephone Oct. 23-Nov. 19, 2006. It has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

Post Office Forwards. Is E-mail Next?

The post office forwards letters when a person moves, and telephone companies likewise forward calls. Should Internet companies be required to forward e-mails to customers who switch providers?

There is no mandate governing e-mail forwarding, and industry officials say imposing one would be costly and unnecessary. But federal regulators are looking at the issue more closely following a complaint from a former America Online customer who claims an abrupt termination of service devastated her business.

Gail Mortenson, a Washington-based freelance editor, in July filed a six-page petition with the Federal Communications Commission, which opened a 30-day public comment period that ends Oct. 26, followed by another 30-day period for replies.

Mortenson said in her complaint that she lost potential clients because they couldn't reach her, and she requested that Internet service providers, such as Time Warner Inc.'s AOL LLC, be required to forward e-mail traffic from a closed account to a new e-mail address designated by customers for at least six months.

FCC spokesman Clyde Ensslin said he wasn't aware of previous petitions regarding e-mail address forwarding or portability.

While mainstream consumer groups have not taken up the cause, it is starting to gain some attention in Congress.

Mortenson said a representative from the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, chaired by Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Calif., contacted her Monday to say they were watching to see how FCC handles her complaint.

Messages left for the committee on Tuesday were not immediately returned.

Internet providers, including Time Warner Cable Inc., Comcast Corp. and Verizon Communications Inc., as well as Google Inc. and Yahoo Inc., which provide e-mail services, declined to comment. Several said it's the first time they've heard about the issue.

Kate Dean, executive director of the U.S. Internet Service Provider Association - a trade group whose members include AOL, Verizon and Comcast - said it will respond to Mortenson's petition, but declined to make any comments until then.

Some companies, such as Yahoo and Google, allow their e-mail users to forward incoming mail to another address. There are other companies, such as Pobox.com, that also provide an e-mail forwarding service.

Richi Jennings, an analyst with San Francisco-based Ferris Research, said he imagines the FCC could mandate that companies provide a free e-mail forwarding service, but doubts that it would

"Such a forwarding service would cost the service providers money in network bandwidth, server utilization and operational overhead," he wrote in an e-mail. "Service providers typically operate with low margins, relying on volume to make acceptable profit."

Art Brodsky, spokesman for Public Knowledge, a public interest group, said there's ample consumer competition in the market and doesn't think the FCC will do anything further.

The company closed Mortenson's account last December soon after the company learned it was actually opened by her son several years earlier when he was a young teenager. The account was still in his name although Mortenson was paying for it.

AOL spokeswoman Anne Bentley wrote in an e-mail to the Associated Press that AOL is still investigating the facts of Mortenson's petition, but said it has "strict policies to prevent minors from creating paid AOL member accounts."

She also said the company doesn't believe circumstances related to Mortenson's account "present any issue of public policy."

Mortenson said she wasn't given any warning and lost personal and professional e-mails, documents, contact information and other materials associated with her AOL screen name. She said the action hurt her business at the time and is considering a civil lawsuit against the Dulles, Va.-based company.

Mortenson, who now has two e-mail accounts from different companies, said she complained numerous times to the company before filing the petition with the FCC.

"Many people think it's a very stupid idea," she said. "My reason for doing this is to get AOL's attention. They didn't care about the adverse effects this was going to have on me."

After Theft, Tech Support Call Lands Man In Jail

Here's a tip: If you steal a printer used to print driver's licenses, don't call the manufacturer asking for driver software.

It's a lesson that Timothy Scott Short learned all too well this month, when he got arrested after placing a couple of calls to Digimarc's tech support line.

Short, 33, is facing felony charges for possession of "document-making implements" in connection with the theft of a Digimarc printer used by the state of Missouri to manufacture driver's licenses.

The printer, along with a PC, were stolen on the evening of Oct. 5 from the St. Charles contract office of the Missouri Department of Revenue, said Trish Vincent, director of the department. These offices are run by individuals who are subcontracted by the department to issue driver's licenses, Vincent said. The pilfered printer could be used to produce a license, Vincent said.

The PC, however, was locked with a key, and because the key was stored in a secure location, the PC was unusable to the thief, said Vincent.

So what do you do when you have a stolen driver's license printer, but can't use the PC that goes with it? Enter Digimarc's tech support line.

According to a sworn statement by Secret Service Special Agent John Bush, someone who identified himself as "Scott" called Digimarc two days later and asked if he could buy printer drivers for the model of printer that had been swiped from the St. Charles office.

The Secret Service agent later listened to a recording of this call and recognized Short's voice from a prior investigation, Bush said. The caller also gave Digimarc the same phone number Short had used in an unrelated identity theft case, Bush said.

Short was charged on Oct. 11, and is facing 10 years in prison and a $250,000 fine, according to court filings.

"The stolen equipment contains the identifying information and photographs of between 200 to 500 Missouri residents," Bush said in the statement. "The only use of the equipment is the manufacture of state identification documents."

The state has sent notification letters to those affected by the theft, Vincent said. The computer contained name, address, and date of birth data, but not Social Security numbers, she added.

Digimarc declined to explain how the Secret Service ended up listening to its customer support calls. "Because of a confidentiality agreement with our customer and because this is a criminal matter, we are not able to comment on the incident," said Digimarc spokeswoman Leslie Constans.

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